

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

page 7

Bell still undecided on Helms case

By United Press International

Washington

Calling it "most active thing in my office," Attorney General Griffin Bell said Oct. 3 he will decide soon whether to seek a federal indictment against former Central Intelligence Agency Director Richard Helms on charges of lying to Congress.

Mr. Bell conceded he has had plenty of advice from senators and other government officials on Mr. Helms and the CIA involvement in Chile — most of it advising him to drop the controversy because a Helms public trial might damage national security.

"I'll make a decision at an early date on the Helms matter," he said.

"It's about the most active thing in my office, I suppose, because I've got to make a decision. I'm considering foreign intelligence that would be involved on the one hand — and on the other hand the gravity of the allegations. We've got to come down somewhere between the two extremes."

Mr. Helms, who served as director of the CIA from 1966 to 1973, has been accused of lying to a congressional committee in denying close CIA infiltration and involvement in Chile before and during the administration of leftist President Salvador Allende.

The attorney general was interviewed on the NBC Today program about reports he is under extreme pressure not to indict Mr. Helms, who recently retired as ambassador to Iran.

"Well, I'm under a good deal of — I don't consider it to be pressure, incidentally — but I know how people feel and it ranges from senators to former high government officials to people in the government now," Mr. Bell said.

"You know these sort of cases — no one ever comes to you and says 'prosecute.' They all say 'don't prosecute.'"

He was asked if refusal to prosecute would give government officials a license to lie to Congress.

"That's the difficult thing. Ordinarily, you wouldn't think of doing that," he replied, noting the Justice Department earlier this year obtained the first federal indictment against an FBI agent.

C.S.M. - page 7